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Writing fiction; a phenomenological study of the creative writing experience of fiction writers

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Abstract

While the focus of previous psychological research on artistic creativity has been mainly cognitive, the phenomenology of creativity has been largely neglected. This research aimed to address this gap, exploring how fiction writers experience the creative writing process. Two semi-structured interviews were carried out with published fiction writers. A thematic analysis of these interviews was conducted in order to explore how writers experience the creative writing process. The three common emergent themes that were selected for analysis were firstly, finding your voice, secondly, living between two worlds, and thirdly, facing the challenges of writing. This study generated insight into the creative writing experience of fiction writers.

Introduction

Previous research

Research on artistic creativity has in the past followed a number of different paths such as cognitive, personality, contextual, psychometric, psychoanalytic and pragmatic approaches (Nelson and Rawlings, 2007). The focus of these approaches has mostly been on correlates of creativity, characteristics of creativity, contexts of creativity and developmental pathways to creativity. While these approaches have provided valuable perspectives on the concept of creativity, the phenomenology of creativity, or in other words the manner in which creativity is subjectively experienced by the artist, has been largely neglected by psychological research.

An example of a key study about creative writing from a non phenomenological perspective, is that of Michael's (2016) which explored the unconscious fantasies of writers from a psychoanalytic perspective. It was found that writers invested their writing with fantasized powers of healing and self-sustenance, selected readers who could help them complete their work but also separate themselves from it, developed a unique process or method of writing that represented an external solution to internal challenges and that self-criticism was the main reason for writing inhibition. Another key example of non phenomenological research is Paton's (2012) study which explored the concept of flow, looking at the specific example of character empathy, as experienced by a sample of Australian fiction writers. It was found that the concept of flow can help explain the dichotomy between conscious, controlled writing and unconscious processes or altered states of consciousness. Writers' deep familiarity with story content, including the characters, can lead to the deep concentration, the losing of the sense of time and the lack of self-awareness that characterize the state of flow.

The few studies that have investigated creative writing from a phenomenological perspective mainly originate from academic fields other than psychology such as education or occupational science. Healy and Merga (2017) explored children's writing from a phenomenological perspective that views writing as an experience of the self, the expression of ideas, and the existential phenomena of the lifeworld. They proposed that the act of writing involves cognitive, affective and interpersonal aspects. Cognitive aspects, include developing ideas and converting them into written language, affective aspects, refer to the mood and motivation of writers, and interpersonal aspects, include the perception of readers. Healy's (2019) study about children's experience of creative writing in the classroom explored how the affect, embodiment and materiality of their environment impacts the child's writing experience. Three main themes were identified which indicated a binary experience of writing with the child's consciousness shifting between their imagination and the task before them and with each of those affecting the way the experience of the self appears to the writer. Although the findings of these studies are interesting, they may not be very relevant for adults as significant differences between the creative writing of children and that of adults may exist.

Rampley et al.'s (2019) phenomenological study from the field of occupational science explored the relationship between creative writing, well-being and identity for writers who regarded creative writing as a serious leisure occupation. Five main themes were identified from the data, namely creative and communicative freedom, writing as an escape from reality, writing as intrinsic to sense of self, the vulnerable identity of 'writer', and strategies for coping with the vulnerability of a writer's identity. It was found that the participants could express their feelings and obtain emotional clarity through creative writing. Regarding the relationship between well-being and creative writing, it was found that the

participants experienced joy, excitement, escapism and a sense of intensity, but that these feelings could make them reluctant to stop writing and this in turn could have negative consequences for their routines and their social life. It was also found that although writing provided a strong sense of identity for the participants, this identity could be vulnerable if their writing did not receive external critical affirmation. The use of an all-male sample in the study may mean that the findings do not apply to female writers. Moreover, the use of participants who view creative writing as a serious leisure occupation may mean the findings do not apply to professional fiction writers.

Nelson and Rawlings (2007) phenomenological study of artistic creativity explored how artists from a range of diverse artistic fields (including writing) experience the creative process. Their findings were organized in nineteen interlinked themes, with three closely related dynamics operating within these nineteen themes, namely an intuition-analysis dynamic, a union-division dynamic, and a freedom-constraint dynamic. More specifically, regarding the intuition-analysis dynamic, there seems to exist a movement between more intuitive and more critical, analytical mental processes. Regarding the union-division dynamic, there seems to be a movement between a unity in sense of self and lack of self-awareness while immersed in the creative activity and a return to the awareness of other mental objects, including the sense of self. Regarding the freedom-constraint dynamic, there seems to be a movement between a sense of freedom experienced while absorbed in the creative process and feelings of vulnerability, but also other more positive feelings, after completing the artwork.

In an interdisciplinary study, also influenced from phenomenology, Doyle (1998) explored the experience of creating literary fiction. The themes found were used along with theoretical concepts from psychology, phenomenology and literary theory to construct a

tentative modal account of writing fiction. It was found that for those interviewed, writing progressed through alternations between a “writingrealm” (in which the writer withdrew from everyday life in order to write, to plan and to reflect on their writing) and a “fictionworld” (in which elements of the story came to the writer as narrative improvisation unfolded). It was also claimed that writing fiction differs from other creative domains in that one of its main modes of thought, namely narrative improvisation, involves stances in a fictionworld from viewpoints different from the writer’s own.

In summary, the creative writing process has been studied from a range of different perspectives and from various academic fields. Non phenomenological studies have focused on different aspects and factors of the creative writing process such as for example the unconscious fantasies of writers or how the concept of flow influences the writing process. Similarly, phenomenological studies have focused on different aspects of the creative writing process, such as for example the impact of the environment on the writing experience, the relationship between creative writing and identity, or creative writing as an experience of the self.

The current study

Since the small number of studies that have explored creative writing from a phenomenological perspective originate from a range of academic fields, the focus of these studies has been diverse, such as on educational or occupational aspects of creative writing, and their conclusions varied. The present study aimed to fill this gap in the literature by exploring from the field of psychology and from a phenomenological perspective how fiction writers experience the creative writing process. In other words, it sought to understand the writers’ unique experience and worldview and to describe their lifeworld. The research question was: ‘How do fiction writers experience the creative writing process?’

Method

Design

Phenomenological Qualitative Design was used in order to gain understanding of the way fiction writers experience the creative writing process. A thematic analysis found themes in response to this and lifeworld features were uncovered to explore participants' lived experience.

Participants

A purposive sample of adult participants was used in this research. Writers who have published fiction books and who were therefore likely to have the relative experience and knowledge needed to provide detailed responses to questions relating to the phenomenon of creative writing were recruited. Since the main author of the paper is also a writer, he recruited participants among writers he knows personally. Participants were over 18 years and did not belong to a vulnerable category. The first participant, given the pseudonym Anna, is a woman aged 75 who has published four novels. The second participant, given the pseudonym Stamatis, is a man aged 45 who has published two short story collections.

Materials

Information given by participants was captured by an audio recorder and then the data was transferred to a secure location i.e. the hard drive of the main author's personal computer and the files were protected by a password. A copy of the interview schedule is included in the appendices (see Appendix A).

Data collection

Data was collected via semi-structured interviews in which open ended questions were asked. Semi-structured interviews are ideally suited for phenomenological research as

they allow the researcher to explore the subjective meanings of the participants and to collect rich descriptions of concrete experiences (Lynden, 2016). Since the research question focused on key characteristics of the experience of creative writing, the aim was to collect rich and detailed descriptions of that experience.

Procedure

The research was carried out as part of a student research project. A research proposal was submitted and gained ethical clearance before proceeding with the research. One participant was recruited for the pilot interview and then the interview questions were slightly adjusted based on the outcome of the pilot interview. Then two interviews were conducted with two more participants. Interviews were conducted in Greek, since both the researcher and the participants are native Greek speakers. Then the data from the interviews was transcribed and translated in English. The data analysis was conducted by coding the transcripts, moving gradually from initial codes to developed ones, and from developed codes to themes by looking for relationships between the codes and then considering a meaningful title for each theme that aimed to capture what the relationship was about. A list of initial codes, developed codes and themes can be found in the Appendices (see Appendix D). Some of the codes identified were not used as they did not fit into a clear theme or were not relevant to the research question. Furthermore, some of the themes identified were not used as they were not particularly relevant to the research question or were not common for both participants. Out of the themes that were identified in each transcript three common emergent themes from across the transcripts that best contributed to answering the research question were selected for interpretation in the report. The interpretation of the themes was built up and supported through the presentation of quotes from the data.

Ethics

Participants read a participant information sheet (see Appendix B) with all the necessary information and signed an informed consent form (see Appendix C) to demonstrate that they voluntarily agreed to participate. A topic that is not particularly sensitive was chosen for exploration. The interviews were conducted at a quiet cafe where the participants could feel safe and relaxed. If the participants had become uncomfortable or distressed during the interview, the researcher would have attended to this and assess if additional support was required. After the interviews the participants were debriefed. It was explained to them how they can obtain further information and any needs for additional support were addressed.

The information the participants provided was treated confidentially and anonymously and any identifying information such as their name and the titles of their published works was changed or omitted. As the participants talked extensively about the plot of their books, they were contacted after the interviews in order to be made aware of this point and were asked if they allow their data to be used or if they wanted to withdraw it. They confirmed that they allow their data to be used. Participant data was managed in line with the General Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). The data was stored in a secure location i.e. the hard drive of the main author's personal computer and the files were protected with a password.

Findings

The present study explored how fiction writers experience the creative writing process. On reading the transcripts, a number of themes emerged from the data. Three common emergent themes from across the transcripts were selected that specifically address the research question. The three themes are firstly, finding your voice, secondly, living between two worlds and thirdly, facing the challenges of writing.

Theme I: Finding your voice

For both participants finding their own voice through their writing seems to have been a crucial step in the creative writing process. Finding their voice meant being able to express themselves, to write about the things they care about. Stamatis began his adult creative writing with poetry but at some point felt frustrated:

35 *I wrote very*
36 *rarely because I didn't get something out of it. What I am trying to say, I couldn't*
37 *express myself through it, nor could it lead me to a different place. And I didn't*
38 *exactly realize this. I realized it later on.*

But as soon as he tried writing prose he realized that this was the form that suited him and in which he could express the things he wanted to express. In fact, the feeling was so powerful that he felt like he had discovered a new world:

38 *[W]hen I wrote my first short*
39 *story I felt like I had discovered a new world. Which I couldn't have found... This is*
40 *why I realized then... Then I realized what it meant not being able to express myself*
41 *through poetry. That is to say, the wall I was finding, which I didn't understand was*
42 *leading nowhere. I realized it later on when I moved on to a different kind of form and*
43 *in this form I could speak, I could say the things I wanted to say.*

For Anna, on the contrary, finding her voice did not come from changing the form she was writing in, but through her life experiences. She had to first create her own distinct path

in life and to overcome her fears that she had messed up her life or that she had thrown away her opportunities:

245 *I didn't do any of the things*
246 *that I was supposed to do. I did other things. And I also think that creatively because*
247 *I entered into this kind of businesses and circles and opened up; I think that through*
248 *this way I was able to overcome the feeling that I had made a mess of things, that I*
249 *hadn't done what I was supposed to do being so clever as I was, anyway all the*
250 *different things that they say [laughter]. Alright and I also found my own voice.*

This was achieved through her creative and successful career in film production which gave her the self-confidence that she may also have to say something of her own as a writer that has value:

197 *But all of this because I was in a very creative situation with all*
198 *these film crews, that is to say they were fine films, perhaps it gave me the*
199 *self-confidence that I lacked. Very likely. To be able to say something of my own.*

Theme II: Living between two worlds

Both participants talked about the unique condition of the writer who lives between two worlds, the real world and the fictional world they have created. This seems to have significant consequences for their subjective temporal and spatial experience. Anna in particular has felt like living simultaneously in two places ever since she was very young. A

sickly child spending a great part of her childhood in bed inside a dark and cramped house, she escaped into the places she created with her imagination:

426 *Because from a young age I had gone through many*
427 *childhood diseases, I almost spent my entire childhood lying in bed. And there I kept*
428 *reading and reading and reading. So, this thing in a small and dark home, this is how*
429 *I have experienced it, for me it was a huge... it was another world. That I was able to*
430 *escape reality and live inside these novels. And of course, I made my own stories that*
431 *were non-stop. I didn't have to write them, I lived them in my head.*

But what was once her refuge during a difficult childhood, has now also become a burden for her:

416 *What makes being a writer a heavy thing... I personally feel like I am*
417 *living inside another world. And because I always lived between this world and*
418 *another world... That is to say, I had this since I was very young, I had a world of my*
419 *own in which I lived in. It is not a simple thing.*

This 'heavy thing' has apparently to do with the process she goes through when writing her books, using elements from her 'real world' experiences and transforming them into fiction in the parallel universe of her fictional world:

121 *I think because I am now old, that what I have inside my mind is like a mill*
122 *that grinds and grinds and grinds from very early childhood because I remember*
123 *things that then somehow disguise? Transform? And why is it that obsessions with*

124 *certain kind of things that I find in my early writings, those that I dragged on for ten*
 125 *years, that I suddenly find that elements of these characters are in my most recent*
 126 *novel?*

What makes it even more difficult is that drawing on her own experiences to write her stories, means that she has already experienced firsthand the feelings of her characters:

455 *That is to say, the feeling I express in this book is not a*
 456 *description. It is what I have felt. Of course, in a way it comes out differently in a*
 457 *book. This is why I am saying than when you write and the world you create is not a*
 458 *simple thing. It is not in cold blood. For me at least.*

Stamatis also recognizes that he feels ‘split’ between the real world and the fictional world:

360 *You are a split personality. You must be inside the world but also not be*
 361 *inside the world.*

He even hints that perhaps similarly to Anna, he can also be inspired from events in his life, although for him this does not seem to necessarily be the case:

347 *The others will*
 348 *continue to chase butterflies and you will write something that is related to it or is*
 349 *not related to it but this whole life inside you, this vitality will be transformed into*
 350 *the process of writing.*

Moreover, he admits that writing can have a significant impact on his sociality. For whereas people who are not writers can constantly have new experiences, a writer having had new experiences and thus having recharged his batteries must eventually withdraw from social life in order to write:

352 *Because the experiences you collect, the ideas you collect*
353 *and so on, some people would continue to do this constantly. But you may say for*
354 *example, I will stay at home one day from morning till night, I won't go anywhere,*
355 *because I am in the mood to write, I want to write. So, you are also in a parallel*
356 *process to the world.*

However, Stamatis recognizes that writing can also have a positive impact on his sociality in the sense that it provides him with the incentive to engage with the real world and to meet new people:

295 *In other words, I would rather do*
296 *something creative, to learn something new, to talk to different people.*

Therefore, Stamatis paints overall a more positive picture of his situation recognizing that writing can lead him to do new and interesting things and to become the catalyst for personal growth:

299 *To do something different that you have not done before in certain*
300 *occasions. In other words, you must take advantage of the fact that you are a writer*
301 *in order to change, to evolve.*

Theme III: Facing the challenges of writing

Both writers have faced significant challenges when writing their books, although for each of them different parts of the writing process are the most challenging. For Anna, beginnings are slow and painful processes. Not only does she hesitantly start a new story but it also takes her a long time to develop it. One thing is for sure; writing starts with certain characters that appear as out of thin air and then she stays with these characters for a long time and tries to get to know them:

331 *I am difficult*
 332 *with myself. I don't start by saying "I have this idea, what a nice idea to write about*
 333 *this". I start with certain characters that come out and then I write a scene and then I*
 334 *sit and look at it, maybe even for six months and ask myself what is this thing? That is*
 335 *to say, where did this thing come from? For example, in my third book I had written*
 336 *the first chapter where there is this man with the old lady that knocks on his door.*
 337 *Where did the old lady come from and where did he come from? And gradually it*
 338 *became a story.*

For Anna, even more challenging than beginnings are endings. In fact, the main challenge she faced as a writer for many years was to complete her stories. At first, Anna suggests that this issue has to do with not planning ahead when she writes:

84 *Yes, I didn't know where it was going. Why? Because when I write, even now when*
 85 *I write, I haven't planned a thing. I don't write based on a story that I have thought*
 86 *from before.*

But as it quickly becomes clear, there also other other issues lurking underneath, such as her fear of showing her work to other people and being exposed to criticism:

88 *I have thought about this, that is to say that my main problem was*

89 *that when it was completed obviously I would have some kind of... I would show it.*

90 *Perhaps I was very... perhaps I was scared of this thing,*

Moreover, as it becomes apparent when talking about completing her first novel, this issue also has to do with having high expectations of herself and not being easily satisfied, being under this ‘critical eye’ she has always felt was hovering above her:

155 *That I had completed it and that I had written a story that had ended, it was*

156 *from the beginning until the end. You may find it strange but I had this issue since I*

157 *was a child. That I always felt that I was under this critical eye that I could not get*

158 *over in any way. And of course I have high expectations of myself. I am not easily*

159 *satisfied.*

Anna feels that her issue with endings was conclusively resolved only in her most recent book because in what was by far her most complicated novel, she managed to link all the topics:

373 *All topics are linked, even those topics that you don't think will be linked,*

374 *they do link in the end. At least for me they do. So, I think that my initial problem as*

375 *a writer was resolved here because it was quite hard to... [Laughter]*

And she is now confident that no matter how much time it will take her, she will be able to finish her stories:

386 *I don't have this difficulty anymore. It may take me three years but it*

387 *doesn't matter. I no longer have the fear of where I am going.*

Stamatis also recognizes the challenges of being a writer, which for him have to do with every aspect of the process, starting from the blank page in front of him:

390 *It's the whole process, every aspect of writing. That is to*

391 *say it's not something... it's not easy to take a piece of paper and write something*

392 *that... it is difficult to match all these things together.*

However, he also adopts a more stoic attitude towards writing, while also acknowledging that even during the times you do not write you never cease to be a writer and thus being tormented by your writing demons:

187 *When you like to write, you write. Difficulty is a relative thing. Alright it*

188 *gives you a hard time but what can you do. When I write, I can give it up for a couple*

189 *of days but I don't just give up. I always carry a piece of paper with me to write down*

190 *an idea and then I can start again in order to finish it and so on.*

He also believes that the ending is a crucial part of the story in the sense that it is there that the whole point of the story will be revealed:

192 *The big decision is the ending because it*

193 *is there you must show what kind of message you want to... if you want to show an*

194 *image, some...*

He also recognizes that things can get even trickier if you know neither the ending nor the direction of the story. In fact, they can get so tricky that the end result is writer's block:

235 *Even if I don't know what the story's ending will be... In some cases I*

236 *know the ending from the start and in other cases I know the direction of the story.*

237 *Things are difficult when I know neither the ending nor the direction of the story*

238 *This is the difficulty. This results in writer's block.*

On the other hand, he wants writing to be challenging as is obvious from the way he feels about the stories that were easy to write and did not present a challenge for him:

466 *That is to say, when you do something, it is like trying to solve an exercise*

467 *while you already know the solution. This is not a challenge.*

Overall, Stamatis views writing as an exercise in problem solving where the main job of the writer is to choose between different solutions:

487 *So, what have we got? You have a*

488 *problem and you try to figure out solutions. You don't know where each solution will*

489 *lead you, you have to make a decision, to match what came before with what comes*

490 *after. It is a challenge.*

In the end, whatever challenges these two writers have gone through, they have been able to successfully navigate them as is evident from the fact that they have not only been able to complete some of their stories but also to see them published.

Discussion

The analysis of the three common emergent themes that were identified from across the transcripts allowed to address the research question of how fiction writers experience the creative writing process. The three themes that were identified were firstly, finding your voice, secondly, living between two worlds, and thirdly, facing the challenges of writing.

Overall, there is a considerable degree of overlap between the findings of the analysis and the findings of several of the studies mentioned in the introduction. There exist similarities between the data of the present study and the three dynamics operating within themes identified in the Nelson and Rawlings (2007) study on artistic creativity. Regarding the intuition-analysis dynamic, the participants do indeed seem to move between more intuitive and more analytical processes during their writing. Regarding the union-division dynamic, the movement between the unity in sense of self and lack of self-awareness and the return to the awareness of other mental objects, including the sense of self, seems to correspond with the movement of the writers between the fictional world of their stories and the real world. Regarding the freedom-constraint dynamic, the sense of freedom experienced while writing was again evident in the data. However, although there was evidence of more positive affective feelings after the completion of the writing, the same cannot be said about feelings of vulnerability.

Some of the themes of the analysis resonate with those generated by Rampley et al.'s (2019) phenomenological study about creative writing as a serious leisure occupation. The theme of finding your voice is similar to the theme of creative and communicative freedom identified in that study, since both concern the freedom of self-expression provided by creative writing. Self-expression affords writers the opportunity to communicate and clarify their thoughts, ideas and emotions that leaves them with a deep sense of freedom. There are also similarities between the theme of living between two worlds and the theme of writing as an escape from reality identified in that study. Both themes discuss the relationship between the real world and the fictional world the writers create. Immersing yourself into the fictional world you have created can provide you with an escape from the challenges and constraints of real life but you can also pay a heavy price in terms of the social isolation, the reduced orientation to reality and the emotional burden that this entails.

There are also similarities with Healy's (2019) study about creative writing in the classroom. In particular, the finding that children through their writing create a new spatial and temporal experience, a new world evoked by words, seems to echo the finding that the participants in the present study inhabit the fictional world they create. Participants in both studies described writing as if their minds were watching the fictional world they had created and seemed to experience this watching as transferring them to a different place.

The method of data collection was well suited to address the research question as the semi structured interviews allowed the exploration of the subjective meanings of the participants and also drew attention to the role of the researcher in the research process, inviting consideration of the ways he contributed to the co-production of the data. Moreover, the method of data analysis was also well suited to address the research question since by using a phenomenological approach, there was a direct focus on the participants'

understanding of how they experience the creative writing process and on their meanings of their experiences. In other words, by using a phenomenological approach, experiences of creative writing were studied from the very standpoint of the people who have had them and therefore contributed to the knowledge of creative writing.

However, the present study also had a number of limitations. One limitation was the small sample of only two participants. While this allowed an in-depth analysis of the themes that emerged, the perspective of other individuals with similar experiences may have been particularly helpful in the formation of a more complete picture about the way fiction writers experience the creative writing process. Another limitation of the present study is the researcher's presence during the gathering of the data since the power relations between the researcher and the participants may have influenced the data produced in the interview context, especially since the researcher already knew the participants.

The current study explored the way fiction writers experience the creative writing process. Three common emergent themes from across the transcripts were identified, analyzed and linked to the relevant literature. By researching the lived experience of fiction writers, different ways of looking at the phenomenon of creative writing and hidden dimensions of meaning were hopefully revealed. Further research on this topic could shed more light on the tensions and contradictions that characterize the experience of the creative writing process.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule

Question 1: Can you tell me how you came to write your very first fiction story?

Was there a particular incident that prompted you to write that story?

What happened next?

Could you describe that in more detail?

Do you remember what sort of feelings or thoughts you had after writing that story?

Question 2: Can you tell me how one of your published books developed from first awareness that a story had begun through to the finished text?

Could you describe that in more detail?

Were there any changes in how you experienced this?

Do you remember what sort of feelings or thoughts you had after finishing that book?

Question 3: What does it mean for you to be a writer?

Can you tell me a little more about that?

Question 4: Can you think of a particular occasion when you were particularly pleased or satisfied with how you were writing? This could either be one specific occasion (for example one evening) or a more extended period of time (for example while writing a particular story).

Do you have one in mind?

Could you describe that in more detail?

Do you remember what sort of feelings or thoughts you had during that occasion?

Appendix B

Participant Information Sheet

I am a third-year Open University student doing a psychology project.

The title of my research project is “Writing fiction; a phenomenological study of the creative writing experience of fiction writers”. The aim of this study is to explore how fiction writers experience the creative writing process.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and if you decide to participate you have the right to withdraw participation at any time.

If you decide to participate you will be asked to participate in an interview (about one hour long) in which you will be invited to talk about how you experience the creative writing process. You will have the opportunity to ask questions before and after the interview.

The information you provide will be treated confidentially and anonymously and any identifying information such as your name and the titles of your published works will be changed.

For further information or to discuss issues or concerns about the study or my project you can contact the Module Chair Gini Harrison (by emailing DE300-Chair@open.ac.uk).

Thank you for your time in considering taking part in the study.

Appendix C**Informed Consent Form**

I, the undersigned participant, hereby confirm the following:

Please tick box

1. I have read and understood the information set out in the participation information sheet provided and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research, interview process and my participation. ☐
2. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and understand that I am free to withdraw at any time during or after the interview, without providing an explanation, and that I will not be penalised for doing so. ☐
3. I understand that there will be no reward or payment for my participation, other than the possible benefit of gaining a better understanding of creative writing and how my contribution may benefit future research. ☐
4. The use, storage and destruction of my contributed data (including the measures taken to secure my anonymity and data confidentiality) has been thoroughly explained to me and I therefore hereby agree to the interview being audio recorded and for anonymised quotes to be ☐

used in the final written report.

5. I understand that by signing this consent form, I am signifying my informed consent.

☐

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

[_____]

Print Name

Researcher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Important Contact Information:

DE300 Module Chair: Gini Harrison (email DE300-Chair@open.ac.uk).

Appendix D

Initial codes, developed codes and themes of first interview transcript (Anna)

Initial Codes	Developed codes
Reading and living in a fantasy world	Living in a fantasy world
Trouble with endings from young age	Trouble with endings
Self-inspired in difficult times	Self-inspiration
Complete life change	A changed life
Didn't write for many years	Gap in creativity
Writing for someone to read	Writing for readers
Sense of fulfilment for finishing	Sense of fulfilment
Different life path	A changed life
Writing the script, a way to find herself	Finding herself
Self-expression	Self-expression
Creative time in life	Creative period
Doesn't write with a plan	No planning
No completion due to fear of readers	Fear of audience
From writing book with no end to writing another in record time	Dramatic shift in writing
Inspiration from own material	Self-inspiration
Becomes the characters of the stories	Becoming the characters
Characters are like ghosts inside ourselves	The ghosts inside
Her experiences transformed into fiction	Transformation of experience
Dark atmosphere of her novel from her past	Self-inspiration
Positive comments were incentive for editing	Incentive for editing

Finishing a book meant overcoming feeling inadequate	Proving herself
Not impressed with results but book was well received	High expectations
Satisfied for completing story of main character	Completing the character
Successful and creative career in film production gave her self-confidence to write novel	Finding the confidence to express yourself
Lost the fear of artistic results not being hers	Losing the fear
She never felt good enough compared to her mother	Feeling inferior
Her creative and challenging profession enabled her to find a voice of her own	Finding her voice
Vivid imagination allowed her to design a different life from that of her parents	Creating an original life
Overcoming feeling of inferiority through creativity and success	Overcoming obstacles
Found her way in life and her own voice	Finding her voice
Not afraid of writing and being judged anymore	Fear of writing disappears
Differences between writing books and writing scripts	Different forms of writing
Lost her fear and became a master of her skills	Losing the fear
Scared by bad reviews of second book and didn't publish for many years	Fear of external evaluation
Writing books more personal and of higher value than scripts	Self-revelation
Doesn't feel a writer because she publishes sparsely	Publishing sparsely
Starts a book with characters and scenes not with ideas	Takes time to begin a novel
It takes time to become the characters and enter their world	Creating the fictional world an experiential and gradual process
Doesn't care anymore about other readers' opinion	Fear disappears

Characters develop from inside	Own material
To write about the characters she first has to feel them	Feeling the characters
Last novel the most complicated one but managed to link all the topics	Achievement
Issue with endings resolved	Resolution
Not afraid anymore and confident she will finish	Fearless and confident
Embarrassed to call herself a writer	The weight of the title
If she didn't work she would gladly write her next book	Enjoying the process
Conflicted about her demanding but also inspiring profession	Conflicted
Heavy thing to live between this world and the world you create	Living between two worlds
A sickly child who read and lived in her imaginary world	Living in an imaginary world
Dark post-war climate and family ordeals came out in this book	Inspiration from personal experiences
Experienced feeling transformed into fiction	Transformation of experience
The world of the past only exists in her memories	The outside world becomes the inside world
Satisfaction and enjoyment for achieving a good result	Satisfaction and enjoyment
Writing is hard work but also has its rewards	Hard work and its rewards
She can express her rich experiences	Abundant material
Having lived her life and made her choices	A lived life
Expressing the rich landscapes of herself	Self-expression
She will not be opening new chapters in her life	Settled
Writing about objects was fascinating and she felt free	Fascination and freedom

Draw pleasure from the image a friend drew for her book	Collaboration
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Themes:

1. Finding yourself / finding your voice
2. Living between two worlds
3. Self-expression through writing
4. Trouble with endings
5. Writing professionally

Initial and Developed Codes of second interview transcript (Stamatis)

Initial Codes	Developed codes
Adult writing began with poetry	Experimenting with poetry
Got bored and tried prose	Changing form
Finding your place and your voice	Finding your voice
The idea to write began with his mother narrating him stories	Family beginnings
He made up stories and narrated them to his brother	Family beginnings
Wrote stories in high-school for fun	Writing for fun
Didn't get something out of poetry and didn't lead him somewhere	Poetry a dead end
Writing prose like discovering a new world	Discovering a new world
Realised he was hitting a wall with poetry	Hitting a wall
Finding the form that suits you	Finding the form that suits you
Writing for fun and out of boredom	Writing for fun
Writing like solving crossword puzzles	Writing as a pastime
Found his place and discovered a new world	Finding your voice
Joy, satisfaction and calmness	Joy, satisfaction and calmness
Proving to yourself you can write another book	Challenging yourself
Took time off from writing	Taking a break from writing
Finding what you want to say	Finding your voice
Finding the link between stories	Finding the links
Stories become more targeted	Finding the direction
Focuses on changes in the text	Editing

Losing the inspiration and the imagination	Losing the magical element
The order of the stories gave him a hard time	Having a hard time
A stoic attitude towards writing	A stoic attitude towards writing
Never truly stops even when not writing	Always a writer
The critical point you become confident about the story	Becoming confident
Another critical point the ending	The ending is critical
Writing can also be amusing	Enjoyment in writing
After you feel confident, writing becomes a matter of technique	Writing modes
There are still challenges but you feel safe	Feeling safe
In some cases he had the story in mind	Having a story in mind
Important not to be didactic	Important not to be didactic
Story moving forward but philosophical issue tormenting him	Philosophical challenge
Not knowing the direction and the ending of the story leads to writer's block	Writer's block
Not knowing the direction is a great challenge	Challenges of writing
Helps to have a general idea even if you don't follow it	Knowing the direction
Bad stories are cemeteries of good ideas	Wasting good ideas
A sense of freedom	A sense of freedom
The book is complete when there is nothing left to say	Completing the book
A weight being lifted	A weight being lifted
Writer means being creative and trying new	Openness to experience

things	
To be a writer allows you to change and evolve	Openness to experience
Everything you do gives you material for writing	Inspiration for writing
Being a writer is the motive to do things	A motive to do things
Writing is a parallel process to life	Parallel universe
You do things and then you stop to write about them	Between worlds
Vitality transformed into writing	Transformation of experience
Both inside and outside the world	Between worlds
A split personality between two worlds	Finding the balance
Satisfied and happy in most stories	The satisfaction of writing
Proud but also troubled	Proud but also troubled
The difficulties of writing	The difficulties of writing
Satisfaction for creating a new world	Satisfaction for creating a new world
Satisfaction doesn't last long	Fleeting feeling
Writing is like problem solving	Writing is like problem solving
Satisfied for turning a crazy idea into a story	Challenges in writing
A simple story is purely procedural and technical	Writing must challenge you
Predictable stories are mannerisms	Mannerisms in writing
Writing is solving problems and choosing between solutions is the challenge	Finding innovative solutions

Themes:

1. Finding your voice
2. Feeling confident about your story
3. Living between two worlds
4. Writing that challenges you